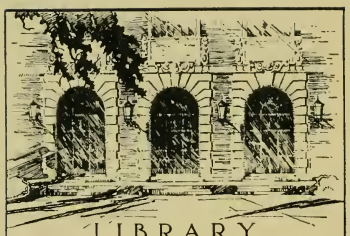

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

THE UNION OF BISHOPS AND PRESBYTERS A DIVINE SAFEGUARD FOR THE CHRISTIAN LAITY.

AN

APPEAL TO HOLY WRIT.

BY

GEORGE EDWARD JELF, M.A.

VICAR OF BLACKMOOR, HANTS,
AND SOMETIME STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

LONDON:
JOHN & CHARLES MOZLEY, 6, PATERNOSTER ROW.
MASTERS & CO., 78, NEW BOND STREET.
OXFORD: JAMES PARKER & CO.
MDCCCLXXIV.

TO

MY BISHOP

THESE WORDS ARE RESPECTFULLY

Dedicated,

IN THE HOPE THAT HE WILL FIND IN THEM

NOTHING CONTRARY TO THE LOYALTY OF AN ENGLISHMAN

OR THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN.

The Rare Book & Manuscript Library
UIUC

PREFACE.

TWO criticisms will probably be made by many of those who take the trouble to read this Appeal—the one, that it comes too late; the other, that it shows a disregard for English law, and a wish, on the part of a professedly moderate Churchman, to defend those who are the objects of this present Act of Parliament.

To the first, it may suffice to reply—(1) That the Appeal, such as it is, was made by the writer, as "An English Presbyter," several weeks ago (before the Bill left the House of Lords), but was not considered on its merits, possibly because it was advanced, as indeed it is now, by an unknown man; (2) That the Act will not come into operation for nearly a year, and that in the interval we should aim at suggesting, both to Convocation and to the Legislature, such amendments as may tend even yet to peace; (3) That where Scripture testimony is, as in this case, strong, it will ultimately prevail over Acts of Parliament.

This brings us to the second objection, which may seem all the more obvious after the last remark. The answer is at hand, though urged with great deference to the authority of wiser and better men in Church and State—viz. : (1) that submission to Law is not synonymous with acceptance of the Law as final; (2) that the English people will not rest in this as a final Law, if, after having time to think, they find it contrary to Holy Writ;[1] (3) that, pending such other possible change, the Bishops can, if they will, even under this new form of procedure, convene a body of Presbyters before giving their decision; (4) that, if this were done, the second order of the Ministry would be drawn towards, instead of being estranged from, the first, and would become supporters, and no longer passive opponents,[2] of the Law of the Crown and of Parliament; and (5) that, having such a hope,

[1] It need not be thought that the authority of the Sovereign or of the people would be impaired if the Presbyters were, by actual legislation, recognized as entitled, *jure Divino*, to a share in the councils and government of the Church. At the Council of Arles (the very one which was attended by three British Bishops, A.D. 314) there were not only several Presbyters present, but the Presbyters were summoned by imperial edict, *i.e.* by the command of Constantine. This very remarkable fact should be noted, because the Church at that time was actually "established," and so supplies a parallel for our generation. (See Bingham's "Christian Antiquities," vol. i. p. 263.)

[2] The term 'passive opponents' is chosen advisedly, as it is unhappily probable that, under existing circumstances, some at least will suffer deprivation and poverty, rather than submit.

the writer, in common probably with many other moderate men, while utterly disliking ever-fresh minutiæ of ritual, and having no wish even for the old vestments, cannot renounce all deep sympathy and high communion with those who, together with some of the very opposite school, have been in the forefront of the battle, fighting for the Truth of God.

In conclusion, the writer would venture to ask his fellow Churchmen among the Laity, whether any class in England has more thoroughly upheld the duty of obedience to the Law and loyalty to the Queen than the Clergy have done, by their prayers, their teaching, and their example.

To his brother Clergy he would say: Let us do nothing rashly, either in the way of defying the Law, and so being driven from our posts, or in the way of sadly resigning our charges, so as not to set ourselves, even in appearance, against the Law—thus in either case injuring the souls intrusted to us. And on the other hand, let us be very thankful for the lively and, on the whole, loving interest which our laymen, both in Parliament and out of it, take in the practical matters of Religion, and for the evident determination which they show (whatever be their political party) to uphold Christianity in the midst of us, as the best defence of liberty and truth.

To his spiritual superiors he would of course not presume to make any direct suggestions; but he hopes at least that neither they, nor any others, will charge him with presumption for having brought forward these which he believes to be Scriptural principles and precedents, and which he now sends forth with the prayer that, as we greatly need the peace of Jerusalem and not the uproar of Ephesus, they may conduce, in however humble a measure, to the strengthening of our Bishops, the conciliation of our Presbyters, and the unity of our Church.

ACTS XV. 22.

"Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church."

THE welfare of the Church and of the country depends so much, both on the harmonious working of the clergy and the laity, and on the thorough agreement between all orders of the ministry, that, when these seem, as at present, to any degree endangered, it becomes a Christian duty for every loyal priest in his office, for every faithful layman in his sphere, to exert himself for the removal of misunderstandings and the promotion of peace. May God enable us to help and encourage one another; and may He put far from us all words which may do hurt, and every thought of prejudice and bitterness, and the contentious spirit of controversy!

It is a great comfort that all we who confess His Holy Name can agree in the truth of His Holy Word, and may find therein, if we will but cherish a candid mind, a home of love instead of a field of battle. Let us go to the Divine Master of the Household, and

ask Him so to fill us with the grace and wisdom of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth there, that we may be kept secretly in His Tabernacle from the strife of tongues. We pass through the door, and are at once in a familiar place. The Church, for which the LORD had prepared us in His Gospel, and of which He had spoken such blessed promises, and to the work of which He had sent His chosen servants, stands before us, founded in His Name, filled with His Spirit, growing more and more in His strength, and through the accession, granted by Him, first, of thousands, and then of "many ten thousands"[1] of His ancient people. But among such numbers, "zealous of the Law," and believing in Him who came to fulfil it, there rise up, as we might expect, some, who say that the outward ceremonies of the Mosaic Covenant are not done away in Christ, and who not only believe, but tell other Churchmen, that it is needful still to circumcise their children, and to keep the old customs of the Jews. Then, of course, dissensions arise. St. Paul and St. Barnabas, both of them Missionary Bishops, argue against the teachers. The teachers will not yield. The law-courts are open, and they might implead one another; but those who are not of the Church could be no judges in such matters; and so the whole question as

[1] "πόσαι μυριάδες εἰσὶν Ἰουδαίων τῶν πεπιστευκότων."—Acts xxi. 20.

between the Bishops and the teachers is referred to the spiritual authorities at Jerusalem, the chief centre of the Christian Religion. Certain persons, including the Bishops, accordingly go thither, and are heartily welcomed both there, and at different points on their journey, by the whole body of laymen (though these were not to decide for them), as well as by the Apostles and Elders. Then the Council assembles; and it is very profitable to notice the order of procedure.[1] "Much disputing" takes place first—hot discussion probably between man and man, for we always feel most deeply and express ourselves most strongly on the things which concern our souls and the souls of others. Then, the noise perhaps gradually lessening during his speech, St. Peter, (as the leader of the Twelve, and the one chosen specially from among them to evangelize the Gentiles simultaneously with St. Paul, who was not of the Twelve,) declares that the yoke which had been proved too heavy for the Jewish people must not be put upon the neck of these new disciples, but that they must be instructed, as the earlier believers had been, to rely, amid all their work,

[1] The writer had not, when he wrote these words, seen the graphic, careful, interesting account of the Council at Jerusalem, given by Bishop Cotterill in his "Genesis of the Church," chap. ix. The Bishop speaks of this as "an event, the significance of which, in all its bearings on Church questions, is not surpassed by any in the Apostolic history."

on "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." By this time the tumult has thoroughly subsided, and all attend to the account given by the Missionary Bishops of the great things which God had wrought by their ministry *without* the observances which these teachers wanted to bring in. Then speaks the Bishop of the Diocese, St. James, "the Lord's brother." He refers, you see, to the words of his fellow-Apostle, not as if they were all-sufficient, but as agreeable to the language of prophecy, and concludes by giving sentence on the case: Let us write to these Gentile converts, "that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood." This decision was received with unanimous approval by the Apostles and Elders, and by the rest of the Church (the deacons and the lay members,) and a letter was sent to give effect to it, as being indeed the decree of the HOLY GHOST, present, according to Christ's promise, with them. And as that SPIRIT of Truth was to abide with men on earth for ever, so, whenever any branch of the Church is in any perplexity, He will always aid us in ascertaining the right course, if we will only call upon Him earnestly, and with one voice, and follow, in our deliberations, those Apostolic examples which He has Himself caused to be written for our learning.

If, for instance, certain men in England

should teach the brethren, and say, "Except you use confession in the hearing of a priest, you cannot be assured of the remission of sins," or, "unless you wear vestments, you cannot celebrate the Holy Communion properly or reverently," or, "If your priest does not stand before the Holy Table, he cannot believe in the Sacrifice, never-repeated, ever-pleaded, in the Eucharist"[1]—then we must employ the Scriptural method, in order to arrive at truth and peace. If the matter has long ago been decided by those who, with the assent of the State, framed our Book of Common Prayer, then we have the decrees which are to be kept, and our duty is submission. If it has not been settled, or if there be doubt as to the meaning of the settlement, we ought to betake ourselves as far as possible to the representatives of those who ordered these things for us, to those who fill the place of the original members of the Church.

We must go first to the Apostles and Elders —that is, to the Bishops and Presbyters—and then ask the laity to concur with these. And since it would be unseemly in a clergyman to take advantage of his position, by laying down the law to those more qualified than himself to judge, without their being able to reply, I will

[1] It is not meant that any such opinion is necessarily held by any at present: these extreme cases are put to illustrate the procedure which should be used even when men do not speak so strongly.

only say that it appears to me not only unreasonable, but unfaithful to Holy Scripture, to leave out the Presbyters or Elders, and to constitute the Bishops and the lay brethren into the only authorities on matters of doctrine and discipline most closely affecting the position of those Presbyters as teachers. Does not this ignore one of the leading principles of the Church—a principle acted upon, even by inspired Apostles, as, later, in General as well as in Provincial Councils ?[1]

It is very remarkable that even the name of a Bishop was given to the Presbyter or Elder. In fact, whenever, in the New Testament, we have the name of a Bishop, it means an Elder.[2] Thus St. Paul writes to the Saints at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons; and charges the Elders at Miletus, about the Church, over which they had been made Bishops by the Holy Ghost ; and in giving directions to Timothy, the chief ruler

[1] Presbyters sat with their Bishops (*a*) in *Consistory*, as in the case of Siricius (circ. 400 A.D.), who called a Presbytery, and with their advice censured the doctrines of Jovinian ; (*b*) in *Provincial Councils*, as in that of Eliberis, where twenty-six Presbyters were present ; (*c*) in *General Councils*, as in that of Constantinople (A.D. 381), where we find three Presbyters subscribing among the Bishops. For other examples the writer would refer to Bingham, vol. i. pp. 262—266.

[2] "The one thing chiefly needful to make the truth clear is simply the straightforward acceptance of what is manifestly the plain usage of the New Testament, viz., the employment of ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος as equivalent terms, one of office and the other of age, as the Fathers repeatedly tell us ; or it may be (as has been conjectured) the former the Gentile, the latter the Jewish name."—HADDAN, *Apostolical Succession in the Church of England*, p. 74.

of the Ephesian Church, speaks first of the Bishop, then of the Deacons.[1]

Now, how can we explain this singular phenomenon? By remembering that there have always been on earth, since our LORD entered on His great work for us men, three orders in the Christian Ministry. First, there were our LORD Himself, the Apostles, the seventy Disciples—this very number reminding us of the original seventy Elders or Presbyters.[2] Next there were (when our LORD had withdrawn Himself, though still to be, above all Ministers, and in them all, "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls"), the Apostles, (to whom He only *then* said, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,"[3]) the Elders or Presbyters or Bishops, the Deacons. Then, as the Apostles were not suffered to continue by reason of death (though our LORD had promised to be with them "alway, even unto the end of the world,"[4]) we find, appointed by them, Apostolical men, like Timothy and Titus, to be chief Bishops or overseers of the Church, and these and their successors, who might have shrunk from the title of Apostle given by the LORD Himself to His first ordained servants, came to

[1] Phil. i. 1; Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8.

[2] Numb. xi. 16. [3] S. John xx. 21.

[4] Mr. Haddan says, commenting on the Epistle of St. Clement: "The Apostles, foreseeing disputes about the dignity of the Presbyterate (ἐπισκοπή, *i.e.*, probably the rulership, generally, of the Church), had appointed an order or method of succession (ἐπινομή), such that

be called Bishops. Under them were the Presbyters, or Elders, who in *their* turn perhaps would no longer like to be named Bishops, and under these the Deacons.[1] From the time, then, of those who succeeded the Apostles, up to our own day, these three divers orders have always continued in every duly-constituted Church; and what St. Ignatius says (writing only eighty years after the Ascension of Christ), is still exactly our rule: "It is necessary that you should do nothing without the *Bishop*, but be subject also to the *Presbytery*, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ; . . . likewise let all reverence the *Deacons*." [2] And, once more, of these three,

themselves first, and certain ἐλλόγιμοι ἄνδρες in succession to themselves, should appoint, while the Church at large was simply to assent to the appointment. And these ἐλλόγιμοι ἄνδρες, who were thus to keep up the succession of Presbyters and Deacons (ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι) when those who had been first appointed should have "fallen asleep," were themselves an order appointed subsequently to the first appointed Presbyters and Deacons, who were long before established by the Apostles at each several time as they planted a Church in each place (κατὰ χώρας καὶ πόλεις), so that these last named were by themselves plainly incompetent to perpetuate their own succession, but needed this further special organization in order to render such perpetuation possible; in other words, needed, and had, the addition of the further Order of (as we now call them) Bishops. And this is the testimony of one who writes in the name of his own Church, as by himself representing it, *i.e.* as its Bishop; a position which it need hardly be said that all antiquity also with one voice assigns to him."—P. 106.

[1] "This matter of Church government must in the nature of the case have been a thing on the whole of gradual development, although we seem to find it nevertheless in all its essential parts almost immediately, and under the very shadow of the yet standing Temple."—Haddan, p. 79.

[2] S. Ignatius ad Trall, 2, 3.

the ministers of the two higher grades always act together, though the first always over the second. Our LORD acts with and through the Apostles.[1] The Apostles act with and through the Bishops or Presbyters. The Bishops act with and through their Presbyters or Priests.[2] If this were but so in England now, much of our existing perplexity might have been avoided; and when we have more Bishops, so that they can have a really manageable body of Presbyters, and these Bishops do take their Presbyters into council with them,[3] our *internal* divisions will in great measure pass away. For it stands to reason, say rather, it is clear to our faith, that when we follow the guidance of Holy Scripture, in any matter, we are setting our feet upon the rock: and "the gates of hell" shall never prevail against Christ's Church, if we, its living stones, do but stablish ourselves in that which came from Christ Himself.

Two objections start up at once—the first, that we seem thus to set aside the rights of

[1] As, *ex. gr.*, when He distributed the loaves to them, and they to the people; or when He commissioned them to remit sins.

[2] *Ex. gr.*, Cornelius at Rome, Cyprian at Carthage, Epiphanius at Ephesus.

[3] Even one of "the very chiefest Apostles" has written thus: "The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder" (ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος). 1 S. Peter v. 1. "The Church has never flourished more, nor has the Episcopate ever been held in truer reverence, than under the guidance of those Apostolical prelates, who, like St. Cyprian, resolved to do nothing without the consent of the clergy." (See Hook's Church Dictionary, s. v. *Presbyter*, and S. Cyprian, Ep. vi. al. xiv., quoted by Bingham.)

the Christian laity; the second, that it hardly can be necessary to take such formal steps and to assemble such a large company of the clergy, for the settlement of every trifling difference in usage.

I humbly conceive that the answer to the first is this—that GOD will take care of our rights, if we will trust them to Him in His Church, *and in His own way.* Doubtless there are some cases, where the Minister disregards the wishes of the people committed to him, and makes himself a lord over GOD's heritage: just as there are some cases among our dissenting brethren, in which the Minister is at the mercy of his congregation, and becomes (it is their own complaint, not a mere impertinent observation from me) their very slave. And as this which they feel so keenly would not occur if they were not only united with a Presbytery, but subject to a Bishop, so would that which disturbs *us* cease to be a cause of anxiety and discomfort, if we clergy were not only, as we are, answerable to a Bishop, but also bound to regard the harmonious voice of our fellow-Presbyters, fitted, on the Scriptural model,[1] to the Bishop, like the chords to a lute,[2] and thus to receive really from him, through them, the certain sound which must be our guide.

And may not the other objection be met by the reminder, that what may appear a trifle to

[1] That, viz., supplied by the *Acts.* [2] S. Ign. ad Eph. 4.

us, may really, through its reference to something else, have some importance, and embody some principle? Trifling no doubt some of us think the position of the celebrant or the vesture which he wears, just as it would seem trifling to us to gather together a body of divines, in order to declare, among other details, whether it is allowable to eat the flesh of a strangled bird. But "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost," as well as to that company of Apostles and Elders, and to that vast multitude of laymen, to include this among the matters decided in the decree of the Council: and it may be in accordance with the will of Jesus Christ, that we should, for the sake of teaching poor people by the eye, use some special garment in the one service commanded by Himself; and it may prove to be the mind of the Spirit that we should instruct proud people of their need of the One Great Finished Sacrifice by turning away from them towards the Table of our Blessed LORD. It may be otherwise; and I, for one, shall be ever ready to give up, at the call of duly-constituted authority, at the command of my Bishop, acting according to the law of the Church and the law of the land, any point which I may at present hold.

That seems to have been the determination even of that large gathering held the other day: "Show us clearly what the law is, and we will obey it." God grant that that may indeed be

the purpose of us all! Only let us remember, that we must be prepared, not, of course, (God forbid) to compromise principles, but to sacrifice our own will, and humour, and inclination, whether on the side of accepting or on the side of foregoing anything in which the decision goes against us. Look for a moment more at the Council of Jerusalem. They do not say to the Teachers or to the Disciples, "You must give up all these things:" but rather, "Some of these things are to be given up, some are still to be observed." And what was the consequence in the Church of Antioch? "They rejoiced for the consolation." Great also shall be our gladness, if, whether we be priests or people, we can agree in rendering that obedience which is better than sacrifice,[1] though we miss the sweet smell of the incense, and the bright accompaniments of the Spiritual Feast—itself so full of peace and joy to those who sacrifice themselves.

And now, my friends, ere we close, let us dwell for a brief space on a few practical thoughts. They are offered to you all, even to those of you who are fathers to me in years, patterns to me in life.

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 22. The writer wishes to be understood as speaking of obedience to God's will as declared, *ex supposito*, by Bishops and Presbyters—not of obedience to Parliamentary Law, *if* it compromises the Church's equitable freedom, or her testimony to the truth. Only, it is for the Church, and not for individuals, to decide whether this testimony or that freedom be compromised.

1. First, let us bear in mind how constantly we need, amid such trials and contentions, perfect calmness in waiting upon Him who "sitteth above the water flood, and who remaineth a King for ever." It is very difficult to be patient under the perversities and oppositions of others; but as we recollect how much patience we require at their hands, and how much we have learnt through the gentle firmness of others in spite of ourselves, so let us never forget that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,"[1] and that jealousy for Divine truth should always be tempered with charity for human weakness. Such calmness is, of course, His gracious gift; but it falls upon us, if in humility we ask for it, like the dew from Heaven, as we listen to the teaching of age or to the lessons of experience. Often and often there may thus come back to us the simple record of the Acts: "Then all the multitude kept silence."

2. See, further, how much we should gain, by being able to hear from others, and to declare to them, the blessed work of our several ministries. It is, after all, one and the self-same Spirit, who hath stirred us up to our various labours, and hath found in our different characters and temperaments a mode for the diversities of His own wonderful operations, and a channel for the distribution, to thirsting, sor-

[1] S. James i. 20.

rowful, heavy-laden souls, of His own manifold gifts. It is this which causes "great joy unto all the brethren"—this conviction that God has been giving the increase, though the planting has been done by one, and the watering by another—this evident proof of the celestial mission of a Paul, as well as the Christian authority of an Apollos. We need not be afraid, because we acknowledge the zeal of a Wesley, and the piety of a Simeon, that we are denying the excellence of unity, or the grace of the Sacraments;[1] nor need we think ourselves less bound (but infinitely more so as being full of imperfection) to seek the blessings of Communion, because others have brought us witness, in their own holy lives, of the benefits of Prayer. As we look around us, and hear the many voices of the redeemed, and compare our own poor work with that of others, we shall surely learn how much God hath wrought by other means than ours, and shall thank Him devoutly for all that He hath accomplished, not by one set of men, but by many, not by one portion of the Church, but by all. "The Lord hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice."

3. And then, how this retrospect will cheer us on for the unknown times which lie beyond our ken! We cannot tell what is in store for us,

[1] Many of the "Evangelical" clergy (to whom we owe so much, and among whom are some of the best soldiers of the Church Militant against sin and unbelief), would not allow that they even disparage this grace, much less deny it.

nor can we, perhaps, even see our way through the darkness which encompasses us now. But we have marked enough of the rulings and Providence of God in the bygone days, to make us sure, if we will but lift our eyes above the standard, and hopes, and fears of the world, that the future of the Church of England is a very glorious one—that, as her root has been preserved through seasons of spiritual drought, because her root did hold by Christ, so now that, in her great revival, she has stretched out her branches unto the sea and her boughs unto the river, many more who stand aloof from her as yet, shall come and rest under her shadow and be filled with her consolations—that, as she has been for generations, after all that can be said about ministerial coldness and carelessness, a faithful witness to the Truth and Life of GOD, so, now that her members have learnt to realize that Truth, and have been quickened in that Life, she shall grow unto a praise in all the earth.

4. With such a hope set before us, let us strive to set forward her Mission, by promoting within her, so far as lieth in us, that unity of the Spirit, which is so precious to all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and the loss of which enables Satan to get an advantage over us, to an extent otherwise impossible. Let our unity be that of the three sacred orders, the threefold cord which is not quickly broken—that

of the clergy and the laity working heartily with each other, and walking by the same rule, the Divinely wise rule of the Christian Church—that of rich and poor blended together for the good of each other under the One Great Master CHRIST, the Lord of all who call upon Him. And finally, as we meet under His Cross, and in sight of that Altar of which we may all, if we will, be partakers—One Body through that One Bread of life—let our earnest, loving, faithful prayers go up to Him, as from one heart and soul, that He may for ever heal our unhappy divisions, and send down upon our Bishops, and Curates, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of His grace. So, though infidelity rages around us, shall we draw more closely together, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, with one mind and one mouth, here and hereafter, glorifying GOD.

LONDON: R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS.